

Course 41

Using Discussion Methods as a Reflective Practitioner

Professional Development Portfolio Requirements:

Your Professional Development Portfolio is designed to help you apply what you learn at the NJATC's National Training Institute (NTI). It provides you with an opportunity to document your development as you continue to grow as an instructor. Your continued growth depends on how you apply what you've learned – this final stage is dependent on you becoming a reflective practitioner.

Reflective practice is a continuous process from a personal perspective, by considering critical incidents within your life's experiences. Reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice. A self directed approach to understanding and learning that is particularly applicable to instructors and trainers. For the NTI, it refers to the process of the instructor studying his or her own teaching methods and determining what works best for the apprentices.

Description of the Reflective Practitioner

Reflective practitioners seek to solve problems through thoughtful inquiry about practical situations. As a graduate of NTI, you are expected to reflect informally and formally while you are engaged in diverse practical situations within the scope of your teaching. A reflective practitioner continually builds and examines knowledge about learners, the content of schooling, and the contexts in which teaching and learning occur and simultaneously renews and invigorates the teaching practice. Such renewal requires contemplation about yourself and your effect on the teaching/learning process as well as your past acquired knowledge and skills. You should especially seek to integrate previously learned information from your four years with the NTI with your present experiences. It is expected that you may seek more information from colleagues, other instructors and deep within yourself.

What you should accomplish:

- 1. Record your thoughts and problems with the teaching/learning environment and experiences in an ongoing journal. Focus on solutions you may share with other instructors or your training director. Following are some samples of reflection.**

Contrasting Samples of Reflections

Sample #1

Today I fumbled around on the motor controls lesson. We discussed some questions in the apprentices' activity log and the first section went fine. But on the last two I had to jump in and explain the answer to question #3 because the results didn't really turn out perfectly and the apprentices didn't know how to make sense of it.

I realize some important things about this experience. I needed to re-consider the questions that I developed. I didn't set them up in appropriate format or according to the lesson plan format method we learned in year two of the institute. I am checking my notes later and future questioning formats will be improved. I also needed to remember what Dr. Wright said concerning lab experiments. I panicked because the results were different. I needed to throw the question back to the apprentices as we did in course 41 of NTI with some "leading questions" rather than always have the ready and quick answer. I liked how Sherman was able to lead the class and keep us engaged with discussion – I will try to follow his lead with my class.

Sample #2

We followed the regular schedule: Review of last weeks lesson, what we were to cover tonight, answer questions, state tonight's objectives. John, an apprentice who sometimes struggles with class work but does great on the job, expressed concern about safety issues. He is frustrated that the journeymen he works with don't follow the safety guidelines from safety meetings, tailgate lessons etc. I tried to assure him about his concerns but made a note to investigate further to give more recommendations to our training director and to other journeymen.

- 2. Start writing a Reflective Journal that you can use to improve your teaching techniques and interaction with the students. Begin to capture the "art" of teaching.**

Thoughts on Reflective Journal Writing

Your reflective journal is not a depository for mere factual information. It is true that you need to include facts in your journal narrative. Your challenge, however, is to go beyond the facts to make your journal writing an expression of the expectations, perceptions, and feelings that cluster around the experiences of teaching and learning. Your journal is to become essentially a journal of your personal growth.

Reflective journal writing need not be considered a one-size-fits-all experience. You may appropriately use a variety of forms. The 4-R format that follows is a sample of a structured approach that may assist you in your process of reflective journaling.

The 4-R Format:

Recollections—Capturing the Moment

What is it that you remember? Journaling close to the active events of the day will help you record an accurate account. This unfolds as the factual recitation of the event which is the focus for your entry. Introduce the facts by telling your story of what happened. This introduction will set the scene. If the narrative describes a teaching incident, this is the time to address the "who, what, when, and how" questions of the experience. Remember that the basis of your journal narrative may also be drawn from other sources such as something that you are reading or hearing.

Reaction—Engaging the Affective Domain of Attitudes, Beliefs, and Feelings

As you reexamine your statement of the event or issue that is the focus of your journal entry, what does the “evidence” that you have documented say to you? How are you feeling about it now? Connect the dots for your reader. Are there examples that you can reference that will illustrate your response?

Relevance—Engaging the Cognitive Domain of Thinking

How is this related to teaching and learning? How does this connect to your acquired research base and knowledge base? Does this extend your understanding of teaching and learning in new ways? How is this meaningful to you? What impact has it had on you? What new possibilities do you see; what perspectives have changed or added? Try to be as specific as possible to make this reflection concrete and substantive. Analyze your feelings that you had during the experience and how this connects to new or existing understandings of teaching and learning.

Responsibility—Engaging the Psychomotor Domain of Doing

How will this new information, the knowledge gained, be used in the teaching and learning process? What else do you need to know? Project the applications that appear possible at this time. The time spent in reflections is especially valuable as it contributes to personal change and results in enrichment of your teaching and your emerging role as a true servant leader. This is an essential step in the unfolding of your purposefully professional approach to serving as an instructional leader within your classroom and in your local JATC.